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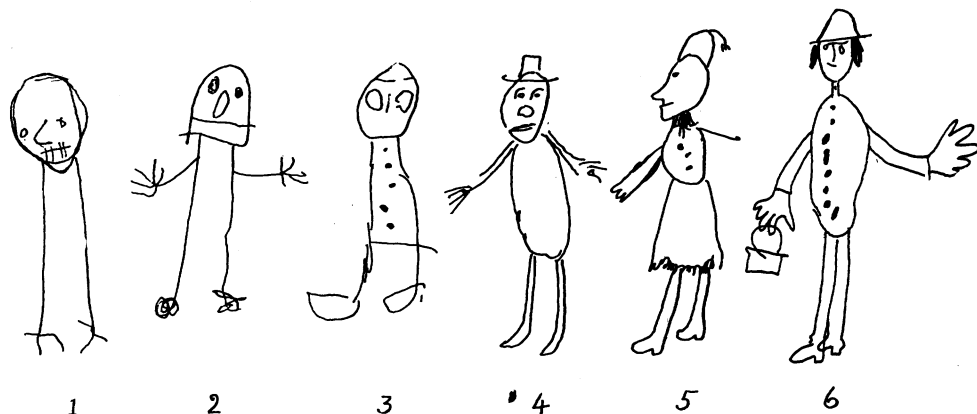
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A Few Suggestions on the Teaching of Art

John Duncan

No error in the teaching of drawing has been so malign as the imposition upon the child of ideas and methods beyond his stage of culture.

Our systems of drawing have come to the common schools from the studios, and though they have a place and function there, they have proved worse than ineffective with the little ones. The method proper for the advanced student will not do for the beginner. There is in the art schools an immense insistence upon technique, but the children must have free swing. Even in the studios this has been carried too far; the art of our time is too much a thing of mere technical accomplishment. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Instead of forcing our adult art and our ways of regarding things upon the children, we had better make a serious attempt to understand theirs, and to help them to realize themselves.

In looking over the drawings done in the schools, one is surprised to find how small a part the human figure plays, although man is surely the most interesting object to man.

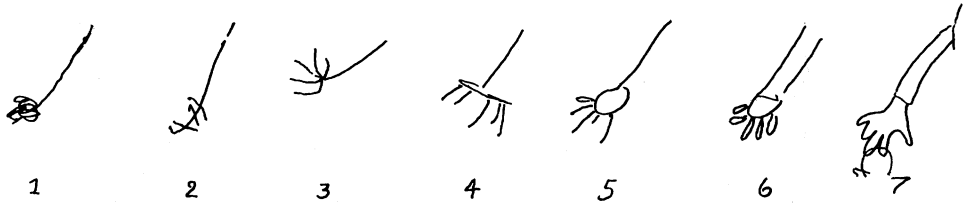
In our theorizings we speak of man and nature, but in our practice things are reversed and nature takes the precedence. The art of our picture galleries is principally devoted to landscape, effects of light and air and perspective. It may be that human kind and animals would have a larger place in the art of the child if he had a freer choice in the matter.

This is practically recognized in the picture books that we give to children, and if they are compared with the class of work cultivated in school, the difference in vitality is apparent enough. The art of the picture book is vivid and spirited, it is crowded with interest and incident; school-room art is dull and lifeless. It is true picture books are not all that they should be. They are often frivolous, if not actually vicious. But the point is, they have life in them; and the school-room art, though morally irreproachable, is dead, like the horse that had every virtue and only that one fault.

The drawings that children make for their own delectation have always meaning and movement. "This little girl is crying because she is going to school without



ILLUSTRATION OF THOMAS THE RHYMER
 Drawn by a child of twelve. See page 404



having learnt her lessons," said a wee lass to me, indicating her drawing.

I remember when I was a boy with what infinite delight I used to watch a fellow-pupil in our school in far-off Scotland draw on his slate unending conflicts between Highlanders and Sassenachs (Saxons; i.e., English). As the men were slain they were wiped off the slate, and redrawn stretched upon the ground. So we overleapt the bounds of pictorial art and invaded the dramatic.

This vital speaking art that the child brings with him when he comes to school is not appraised at its true worth by the teacher, who disdains its rudeness, and fails to read into it all that the child himself sees. The little chap whose imagination is seething with shapes of joy and terror is asked to focus his attention upon things that have for him no charm or significance.

The teacher is impatient with the crudity of his drawing, and cannot wait for the slow and orderly growth of his images of form and color; too often, indeed, she neither knows nor cares if there be any natural order of development; and in forcing him she blunts the freshness of his joy in expression, if she does not kill the art instinct in him altogether.

Let us look at a few drawings done spontaneously by children and see what we can make of them.

The drawings shown in the accompanying cuts (numbers 1 and 2) are the work of very little persons of kindergarten age, and must be regarded with some indulgence.

You will observe that the child states

simply a few facts about the form. Beginning with an almost pure symbol, he adds fact after fact until something of the real appearance of the form begins to come out. There is of course no stereotyped order in the growth; one artist seizes upon one feature and gets to some clearness upon that, and another another. But an examination of these drawings would seem to offer some suggestions toward an ideal order—the mean between individual extremes.

The face is the most arresting and interesting part, and may develop earlier than the other parts. In Fig. 1 we see the head supported on two limbs—the main fact about a man stated viz., that he has a head and carries it around on something. The body is not so important as the arms and legs, which have a more obvious function. The nose is very successfully dealt with in Figs. 1 and 2, its projection in the first and its volume in the second.

Fig. 3 is rather anomalous, wanting arms altogether. He owes his position to his possession of a body, though that is got by a short cut, rather illegitimately, by merely drawing a line from leg to leg and by the addition of a row of buttons—a little technical trick.

The body is first clearly expressed in Fig. 4. The waist and neck and head are added in Fig. 5, which also exhibits very successfully the features as seen in profile. Fig. 6 has his hat well planted on his head, and hiding the top of it as it would in nature, instead of being added above the fully exposed head as in the other cases given. The hand is a triumph; one might



almost suspect that the little artist was somewhat vain of his skill in doing hands, they are brought out so prominently.

In another plate a few drawings of the hand are arranged in a series. In the first figure, the position alone of the hand is suggested. In the second, the fingers are added, simply by drawing three lines across the line representing the arm. In the third, the radiation of the fingers from the wrist is expressed. In the fourth, the student seems to feel dimly that something intervenes between fingers and wrist, and in Fig. 5 this something, the mass of the hand, the palm, is drawn with an appreciation of its shape. In the sixth, the fingers are represented, not by mere lines, but by contour of their mass—a very important step; and in the seventh the fingers are apprehended as continuations of the mass of the hand instead of appendages tacked on to it.

This process may be continued till the thumb is differentiated from the other fingers and the fingers from each other, by an ever subtler appreciation of their varying shapes, proportions, and movements.

On pages 402 and 404 we give two pictures by older children, of eight and twelve

years, respectively. One represents two mediæval knights tilting at each other. The artist's interest in knights and armor was awakened in the Paris Exposition by a statue of St. George and the Dragon by Fremiet. He tried to draw it from memory, but found that his ideas were a little vague, and went back and back to the statue, looking at it from every point of view. From this he launched out into original composition, and in the Musée Cluny and the Petit Palais he worked up the details of the armor. In the street he observed the horses carefully, looking for the typical war-horse at every cabstand.

The other picture illustrates the ballad of *Thomas the Rhymer*. The tale is a Scottish version of the Tannhäuser story. True Thomas, a court poet, is beguiled by the Queen of Faery and carried off to her palace, returning only after the lapse of many long years, when his hair has turned gray and all his friends have given him up for dead.

The road is seen winding away into the distance. The steep and narrow way to heaven is shown, and the broad and easy path that leadeth to destruction. The fiend

waits for his prey at the mouth of the pit. Between the citadel of heaven and the cave of darkness lies the happy valley of Faery-

land, with its flowery woods and its fantastic castle. The picture represents the first meeting of the minstrel and the queen.

Textiles

Clara Isabel Mitchell

Weaving: Apparatus for teaching the beginning of weaving and foundation weaves may be so simple in construction that it can be made by children six and seven years old. Mats and holders have been woven by children of the First Grade on blocks of $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch pine wood 6x12 inches, with a row of small nails driven at intervals of a quarter-inch entirely around the face of the board, a quarter-inch from the edge. This size was chosen as a convenient one for making the articles needed, but boards of other dimensions might be more practical for other purposes. The weaving on such an apparatus is really darning, and is done with a darning or packing needle. The material used is a heavy carpet yarn or cotton roving, chosen for its coarseness, because results are better with the coarse material, also because it is not so taxing to the child. The warp threads may be of one color and the filling of another; or the warp may be striped and the filling put in correspondingly to form checks. The warp—one continuous thread—is stretched up and down the length of the board around each of the nails at the ends. The filling may be put in as in darning, over one warp thread and under the next, alternately, making what is known as the plain weave. If this is varied by drawing one filling thread under two or more warp threads and breaking the order of the plain weave, we can teach twill, satin, and basket weaves. When the strip 6 x 12 inches is finished, it can be slipped off the loom, doubled, sewed or laced together, and will be

useful as a holder for the poker, tongs, or tea-kettle.

A little loom which has been found useful, and which illustrates the principles of weaving, is made in the form of a rectangular frame, with an upright fastened in each corner, and poles or little beams extending across the ends of the loom between each pair of uprights, which have been bored through with holes large enough for holding the poles. Warp threads are tied to the poles and stretched tightly by rolling the poles. After tying an end to one of the poles or rollers, the thread should be drawn through a heddle before tying to the other roller. The heddle or harness may be made in various ways. It may be of cardboard cut with slits alternating with holes so arranged as to hold one set of warp threads, while another set is lowered or raised. A different harness may be made by a system of threads tied to a heddle frame, loops so alternating with free spaces that the warp threads are held as in the harness just described. The most primitive harness is illustrated in pictures of the Indian, Mexican, and oriental looms, simple in construction but slow in operation. Shuttles or bobbins may be made of pasteboard or of wood, and should be as long as can be conveniently held, and used in the selected warp. Packing needles may be substituted when the shuttles seem cumbersome and awkward, and often the weaving is best done with the fingers alone.

The looms and harness last described may be made any size desired, practical